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**Guidance for Aimhigher  
partnerships**

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Strategic plans to be submitted by  
Wednesday 14 May 2008

# Guidance for Aimhigher partnerships

Updated for the 2008-2011 programme

This guidance sets out the objectives, scope and structure of the Aimhigher programme from August 2008; provides advice for Aimhigher partnerships on what they will need to do between February and July 2008 to prepare for the new phase of the programme; and requests partnerships to submit strategic plans for the three academic years 2008-2011.

**Aimhigher...**

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# Guidance for Aimhigher partnerships

## Updated for the 2008-2011 programme

<b>To</b>	Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions Heads of HEFCE directly and indirectly funded further education colleges Chairs and managers of area and regional Aimhigher partnerships
<b>Of interest to those responsible for</b>	Widening access and participation in higher education, including staff in higher and further education institutions, schools and local authorities
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## Executive summary

### Purpose

1. This guidance sets out the objectives, scope and structure of the Aimhigher programme from August 2008; provides advice for Aimhigher partnerships on what they will need to do between February and July 2008 to prepare for this new phase of the programme; and requests partnerships to submit strategic plans for the three academic years 2008-2011. It should be read alongside previous guidance, including guidance on targeting<sup>1</sup>.

### Key points

2. The Aimhigher programme is a key component of government policy to widen and so increase participation in higher education (HE). In October 2007 the Government announced its intention to extend funding for the Aimhigher programme from academic year 2008-09 to 2010-11. This reflects its continuing efforts to encourage groups of learners that are under-represented in higher education to embark on a route which will enable them to benefit from it.

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<sup>1</sup> This document updates previous Aimhigher guidance (HEFCE 2004/08 and HEFCE 2006/02). It is not comprehensive but should be taken as the authoritative guidance where it differs from earlier advice.

### **Improving targeting**

3. In this new phase of the Aimhigher programme we expect partnerships to hone their targeting of the priority groups to ensure utmost effectiveness. These groups are:

- people from lower socio-economic groups
- people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups who live in areas of relative deprivation where participation in HE is low
- 'looked after' children in the care system
- people with a disability or a specific learning difficulty.

We are working to provide more up-to-date data to help Area Partnerships pinpoint their targeting but recognise that this is no substitute for local knowledge.

4. Aimhigher is about widening participation in HE, but within that it is also about addressing fair access issues such as increasing opportunities for people from under-represented groups to attend higher education institutions and courses where competition for places is fiercest and which offer the highest financial rates of return.

### **Developing the programme**

5. We have instigated change within the programme to promote effectiveness. By 2011 Aimhigher partnerships will:

- be able to show how they have contributed to narrowing the social class gap in learner attainment and participation in higher education
- have encouraged more positive learner identities through targeted outreach work
- have embedded Aimhigher activity in the work of all partners by developing links between higher education institutions (HEIs), schools, colleges and work-based learning providers

- have made a recognised contribution to target school and college improvement plans in respect of aspirations, attainment and progression.

### **Changes in management structure**

6. In order to make the programme more effective we are changing the structure, management and governance of Aimhigher in the following ways:

- a. We will only fund Aimhigher Area Partnerships. We will not fund regional partnerships any longer. Area Partnerships will be free to decide whether to collaborate and commission work/services at a regional level.
- b. We will encourage smaller Area Partnerships to amalgamate with others, to ensure that all can sustain an adequate infrastructure to deliver effective local programmes.
- c. Governance and accountability will be improved by agreeing a lead HEI in each area that will be responsible for providing assurance about the use of funding, convening an Area Partnership Committee and appointing an Aimhigher co-ordinator.
- d. We will simplify the format for plans and monitoring reports (see Annex B), including financial monitoring. We will also introduce evaluation reports and commission an external body to assess them.

### **Partnership working**

7. We believe that the ability of the Area Partnerships to work closely with all education providers is key to the programme's success and that the new structures we have put in place should put a renewed emphasis on this.

8. We recommend the use of the Aimhigher Learner Progression Framework<sup>2</sup> and we expect Area Partnerships to forge close relationships with

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<sup>2</sup> 'Aimhigher Learner Progression Framework Feasibility Study (Interim Report)' (Action on Access January 2008) is available at [www.actiononaccess.org/](http://www.actiononaccess.org/)

the relevant schools, colleges, HEIs and work-based learning providers so that they can offer each targeted learner a clear route to progress through to higher education.

#### **Funding 2008-2011**

9. The Government and HEFCE have allocated £239.5 million to the Aimhigher programme for 2008-2011. We are continuing to use the same formula-based funding method as we have in the past, but again will 'smooth' the differences in funding for each Area Partnership to minimise destabilising changes (gains or losses) in the funding for each one. Details of funding allocations are at Annex A.

#### **Plans, monitoring and evaluation**

10. In a change from previous years, we have provided a standard template for Area Partnerships to complete for their strategic plan and, for the first time, an annual operational plan, against which we will monitor progress against agreed targets and milestones (see Annex B). This will give a clearer measure of progress towards the objectives of partnerships and provide a closer link to financial spending profiles and planning.

11. We will also provide templates for periodic financial monitoring and an annual monitoring statement which will be available on the HEFCE extranet (an example of the latter is at Annex C) – see paragraph 102.

12. We will separate the process of monitoring from that of evaluation. This reflects our continued emphasis on the need to develop comprehensive and valid procedures to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Aimhigher programme.

13. As part of our review we have overhauled our evaluation methods for the Aimhigher programme. We have drawn up our detailed expectations of Area Partnerships and explained how we will approach evaluation at the national level (see Annex D).

14. Area Partnerships will need to submit an evaluation plan by 31 July 2008.

#### **Communications**

15. We are currently updating the national communications strategy for Aimhigher to reflect the future communications needs of the programme (Annex E). The strategy will be finalised in February and regular updates will be available on the Aimhigher practitioner site – [www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner).

16. Our recent survey of Aimhigher communications (December 2007) received over 100 responses and we are grateful to all those who participated. The survey responses are currently being analysed and these will feed into the development of the updated strategy. Those interested in reviewing or providing input to the draft version of the strategy can register their interest by e-mailing us at [aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk).

#### **Action required**

17. By Wednesday 14 May 2008, Area Partnerships will need to submit their revised strategic plans (which will include an operational plan for the period 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009) covering the period 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2011.

18. By Wednesday 31 July 2008 Area Partnerships should submit a completed evaluation plan.

19. Area Partnerships should submit their plans to us by completing Annex B, available on the HEFCE web-site with this report, and returning it to [aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk).

## Review of Aimhigher

20. The decision by government ministers to confirm funding for the Aimhigher programme to 2011 reflects the achievements of all those involved in the programme over the last six years. Since the announcement in October 2007 we have reviewed how Aimhigher should be organised from 2008, in order to ensure that its structures, delivery mechanisms and activities offer the most efficient and effective way forward.

21. Aimhigher has passed through a complex transition process as the two separate but related programmes provided by Excellence Challenge and Partnerships for Progression were brought together from 2004 onward. This required careful consideration of the governance and management arrangements so that the interests of all stakeholders could be represented. A National Partnership Board (NPB) and Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) played an important part in this.

22. However, Aimhigher has evolved and matured since its inception as a national programme in 2004, and we believe that the programme will now benefit from a number of changes; in particular, there are opportunities now to reduce the complexity of the management and reporting that was required as the programme became established.

23. We also expect partnerships to enhance their activities to best meet the needs of target groups, through full implementation of the guidelines issued in May 2007 'Higher education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners' (HEFCE 2007/12)<sup>3</sup>. The targeting guidelines defined the target group as people from lower socio-economic groups and from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who live in areas of

relative deprivation where participation in higher education is low. We have been asked to make it clear that this definition includes 'looked after children' and partnerships should take this into account in their plans. Partnerships will note that applicants can record 'care status' on applications to UCAS (the universities and colleges admissions body).

### Changes in management structures

24. We will change the structure, management and governance of Aimhigher in the following ways:

- a. We will only fund Aimhigher Area Partnerships. We will not fund regional partnerships any longer. Area Partnerships will be free to decide whether to collaborate and commission work/services at a regional level.
- b. We will encourage smaller Area Partnerships to amalgamate with others, to ensure that all can sustain an adequate infrastructure to deliver effective local programmes.
- c. Governance and accountability will be improved by agreeing a lead HEI in each area that will be responsible for accounting for funding, convening an Area Partnership Committee and appointing an Aimhigher co-ordinator.
- d. We will simplify the format for plans and monitoring reports (including financial monitoring). We will also introduce evaluation reports and commission an external body to assess them.

25. Instigating a single organisational tier at area level should make the programme more efficient and therefore free up more resources where they

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<sup>3</sup> 'Higher education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners' (HEFCE 2007/12) is available at [www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/target/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/target/)



can be used most effectively. Similarly, a simplified 'management model' featuring a lead HEI offers economies in the management of the programme; this is an important consideration for us and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) since, as with all public funding, running costs need to be minimised. Finally, we believe the closer involvement of a lead HEI will provide us with a higher level of assurance that funding is being used effectively.

26. The Area Partnerships themselves will decide whether to provide or commission activities and services jointly. We expect them to work together in those areas of activity/service where they believe such provision will have a greater impact and could be more cost effective, for example by achieving significant economies of scale, or take advantage of expertise at regional level. We believe that such decisions are better made by the Area Partnerships, working at grassroots level, than by the programme funders.

27. At a national level we will monitor the programme through the Aimhigher Management Group (AMG) which will comprise HEFCE, DIUS, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the widening participation (WP) co-ordination team. The National Partnership Board will be re-constituted as the Aimhigher National Advisory Board.

### **A developing programme**

28. In the next phase, we expect the programme to focus on the development of an Aimhigher learner progression framework as well as further development of the quality and depth of links with schools/colleges. Area Partnerships are the key arena for delivery, most obviously for learners but also for deepening the partnership/relationship between HEIs, schools and colleges.

29. The rationale for the changes we have made to the programme is implicit in our vision for

Aimhigher. Aimhigher is developing as a programme that offers a coherent, sequential and progressive series of activities as part of a learner's personalised curriculum. By 2011 Aimhigher partnerships will:

- be able to demonstrate a distinct contribution to narrowing the social class gap in learner attainment and participation in higher education
- have made a positive contribution to changes in learner identity and attainment through targeted outreach work designed to widen participation in higher education
- have embedded Aimhigher activity in the work of all partners because of its distinctive contribution to the development of links between HEIs, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers
- have made a recognised contribution to target school and college improvement plans in respect of aspirations, attainment and progression.

30. Since its inception, the Aimhigher programme has been characterised by a high degree of autonomy at partnership level, and this will continue. However, we have highlighted core Aimhigher activities (and widening participation work more broadly) that are considered most effective:

- Aimhigher campus visits (generic)
- mentoring (face-to-face or electronic)
- master classes, including subject enrichment or revision sessions
- student ambassadors
- information, advice and guidance
- summer schools and other HE related residential experiences
- school or college based interventions as part of an agreed programme.

Please note: provision is made in planning and monitoring returns for partnerships to report other categories of activity not captured in this list.

31. We expect that Aimhigher activity will continue to have a positive impact on attainment, including helping to inform the choices that young people need to make to enable them to attend the institutions and courses that will best meet their potential. This might include early and active engagement in, for example, science subjects. This can be achieved through appropriately timed learner involvement in science related master classes and other forms of subject enrichment or information, advice and guidance activities.

32. We will expect partnerships to produce strategic and operational plans which reflect an emphasis on these activities (see Annex B). This need not inhibit innovation. These categories are broad enough to create space for development. There is no intention to 'freeze' the programme in its present form but rather focus on a common and characteristic core of activities which will enable each Area Partnership to monitor delivery, impact and value for money more effectively. Partnerships should therefore emphasise programmes of sequenced activity which form part of a learner's personalised development such as that provided by the Aimhigher learner progression framework rather than discrete, one-off activities.

33. Activity is a means to an end: what matters is the outcome for learners. Changes in reporting procedures will separate a simplified monitoring return that accounts for funding from an evaluation report that assesses the outcomes for learners.

## **The Aimhigher partners**

34. Working in partnership is crucial to the delivery of this vision.

### **Schools**

35. The targeting process for Aimhigher has the potential to complement school plans for the personalisation of the curriculum in line with the principles expressed in 'Every child matters' (DfES 2003)<sup>4</sup>. Many learners will have made the decision to progress to higher education at a relatively early age but there will be others who have not considered it. Schools can use Aimhigher Area Partnerships to enrich the curriculum, provide support for learners, and make higher education more accessible by providing sequenced activity as part of an Aimhigher learner progression framework.

36. Learners with a disability, a specific learning difficulty, or those in care that have the potential to progress to HE will need to be targeted in association with specialist staff in schools, colleges and local authorities, and appropriate provision made available. Aimhigher also works with gifted and talented learners to encourage fair access to the academic institutions which best suit their needs, including those with the most challenging entry requirements.

37. The targeting guidelines (HEFCE 2007/12) make it clear that the key target group for Aimhigher is the 13-19 age group, and more broadly, the 13-30 population, in line with the government target for 50 per cent of them to have an experience of higher education. This does not exclude work with younger learners in primary schools or with adults in the community or the workplace. It is simply that we expect the bulk of time and resource to be devoted to these priority age groups.

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<sup>4</sup> Available at [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/\\_files/](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/)

38. Over 2008-2011 we expect work with schools and colleges to assume a greater importance. The quality and depth of the relationship that Aimhigher Area Partnerships have with schools and colleges will be particularly significant. This is implicit in the 'learner progression framework'. A measure of success would be the extent to which schools, for example, identify Aimhigher as an indispensable component of their school improvement plans.

#### **Colleges and other further education providers**

39. Increasingly young people in the 14-19 age range will undertake their learning programmes in schools, colleges and other further education (FE) providers. Colleges have delivered Aimhigher activity for gifted and talented learners in the post-16 phase and have also provided key opportunities to engage with learners in the target group who are on vocational or work-based pathways to HE. They prepare learners for higher education and also provide higher education in their own right. Colleges provide part of the learning for apprenticeships, offer information, advice and guidance on higher education, provide higher education choices themselves, and offer wider options across the partnership. So colleges are playing a vital role in delivering and preparing students for HE and are therefore pivotal in the development of Aimhigher area strategic plans.

#### **Work-based learning and training providers**

40. Work-based learning pathways to higher education are likely to grow significantly over the next phase of Aimhigher with the development of

HEFCE-funded initiatives such as Lifelong Learning Networks<sup>5</sup>, Train to Gain and other employer engagement initiatives<sup>6</sup>. There may also be learners in the age range of 14-19 from the Aimhigher target group on apprenticeship schemes linked to training providers. In some Aimhigher partnerships, training provider partners have added an important dimension to the local offering. There are a number of examples of good practice: in one partnership, training providers and employers have worked with a university to provide an HE summer school for apprentices. In another partnership, a training provider linked learning mentors from a local university with apprentices based on employers' premises. In the context of the targeting guidelines and programme priorities, Aimhigher has a role in supporting work-based learners.

#### **Higher education institutions**

41. Higher education institutions continue to develop outreach work in line with their access agreements and widening participation plans. This includes involvement in the Student Associates scheme<sup>7</sup>, Excellence hubs<sup>8</sup>, 14-19 diploma developments<sup>9</sup> and Lifelong Learning Networks. HEIs are also developing partnerships with academies and trust schools in line with the DIUS proposals in 'Academies, Trusts and Higher Education: prospectus' (DIUS 2007)<sup>10</sup>.

42. Schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and HE providers will all need to be sensitive to the ways in which other networks and provision complement the activities of Aimhigher,

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<sup>5</sup> Lifelong Learning Networks [www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/ln/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/ln/)

<sup>6</sup> Employer engagement [www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/employer/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/employer/)

<sup>7</sup> Student Associates scheme [www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/experienceteaching/jointthestudentassociatesscheme.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/Recruit/experienceteaching/jointthestudentassociatesscheme.aspx)

<sup>8</sup> Excellence hubs [www.cfbt.com/teach/giftedtalentededucation/excellencehubs.aspx](http://www.cfbt.com/teach/giftedtalentededucation/excellencehubs.aspx)

<sup>9</sup> 14-19 Diploma developments [www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/pnattach/20070195/1.htm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/pnattach/20070195/1.htm) and [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_4071.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_4071.aspx)

<sup>10</sup> 'Academies, Trusts and Higher Education: Prospectus' (DIUS 2007) is available at [www.dius.gov.uk/publications/prospectus.pdf](http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/prospectus.pdf)

for example through local area agreements. HEIs and Aimhigher partnerships will therefore need to be aware of, and forge relationships with:

- 14-19 partnerships
- City Challenge areas
- Lifelong Learning Networks
- Connexions and information, advice and guidance services
- Gifted and talented initiatives
- Excellence hubs
- Student Associates schemes.

We wish to emphasise here the importance of working together to ensure clear and consistent advice and guidance.

## **Plans, monitoring and evaluation**

### **Area Partnership plans**

43. We are asking Area Partnerships to submit strategic plans for the period 2008-2011 as before. However, we now require plans to be submitted using a template, Annex B, to be downloaded from the HEFCE web-site and e-mailed to us. In addition we will require the submission of annual operational plans which are included in the downloadable template at Annex B. Annual operational plans will enable us to monitor progress against development milestones and agreed activity and expenditure targets.

### **Monitoring**

44. Partnerships will be asked to submit an Aimhigher annual monitoring statement by 30 September each year, as they have been doing. However, we require Area Partnerships to use a revised template for this purpose which will contain reference to agreed activity and expenditure targets (see example at Annex C). A new Aimhigher typology will be used to describe activity within the programme.

45. We will continue to request financial updates from partnerships on three occasions per year but we will no longer make adjustments to funding within the year. However, no partnership will be allowed to carry forward more than 15 per cent in excess of their annual allocation at the end of the year.

### **Evaluation**

46. In the next phase of Aimhigher we will require partnerships to develop an evaluation plan as a distinct element of their work. We will not require partnerships to evaluate everything they do but will expect a focus on core elements in their programmes. Reports on the outcomes of evaluation plans should be submitted to HEFCE in the first week of September each year.

47. We will commission an external body to analyse plans, monitoring returns and evaluation reports and will follow up these reports where required. We will also maintain support for the programme through a WP co-ordination team (at a level to be determined). We will use the (AMG) commissioned reports (including partnership returns), and the WP co-ordination team to ensure that Area Partnerships continue to be 'connected' (eg through joint area cluster or network meetings of WP practitioners), and to commission further action where necessary.

### **Communications**

48. We are currently reviewing our communications strategy and would welcome input from practitioners (see Annex E).

## **Governance and management of Aimhigher 2008-2011**

49. In the section below we explain the relationships and responsibilities in the new phase for 2008-2011. We also set out the actions that will be needed between February and July 2008 to ensure a smooth transition to the new phase.

50. Please note: in the section below we set out the principles governing the role and relationship of Area Partnership Committees, the lead HEI and so on. In the following section (management in the transitional phase) we detail the steps to be taken between February and July 2008. In this period the existing structure (Area Steering Groups, RPBs, NPB and so on) will continue to operate.

### **The Area Partnership Committee**

51. The distinctive strength of Aimhigher is its ability to represent partners across different education sectors, bringing together schools, colleges, HEIs and other key stakeholders. We do not wish to weaken this partnership dimension and that is why the Area Partnership Committee will be responsible for the area plan and for the allocation of funding.

52. We are seeking the maximum degree of continuity. We describe the role of the 'lead HEI' below but it should be noted that we will ask the existing Area Steering Group (ASG) to nominate and secure the engagement of the lead HEI. Ultimately, of course, the extent of continuity will be determined by decisions taken locally. The Area Partnership Committee performs the same role as the ASG. Where the ASG membership reflects good partnership arrangements we would expect the Area Partnership Committee to look much as the ASG does now. We have changed the name to avoid confusion in documents that refer to both, to mark the change, and to underline the continued importance of partnership.

53. The Area Partnership Committee (APC) will be directly responsible to HEFCE as the programme manager, and through HEFCE to an Aimhigher Management Group comprising representatives from HEFCE, LSC, DIUS and the WP co-ordination team (ie currently Action on Access). This process will be facilitated through the plans, monitoring returns, and evaluation reports that are submitted by partnerships.

54. The role of the APC is summarised below.

- a. Secure good partnership relations and effective partnership working.
- b. Agree a strategic plan and annual operational plan and ensure appropriate reporting of plans through the annual monitoring statement.
- c. Work with the lead HEI to ensure that financial monitoring is conducted and appropriate returns are made.
- d. Devise an evaluation plan and submit an annual evaluation report in line with HEFCE guidance.
- e. Ensure that Aimhigher resources are targeted in line with the targeting guidelines.
- f. Secure agreement on the distribution of funding to schools, and the allocation of funding to partners and other agencies to deliver the plan.
- g. Decide whether to collaborate with other areas to provide or commission specific services or activities (eg at regional level) in order to maximise coherence and value for money.

### **The role of the lead HEI**

55. The lead HEI will appoint an Aimhigher co-ordinator and convene the first meeting of the APC (see transitional arrangements below at paragraph 62 onward), ensuring that it is fully

representative of schools, colleges, HEIs, local authorities and other key stakeholders within the area. The first APC meeting will agree the terms of reference for the group, and appoint a chair and vice-chair. The chair need not be a representative from the lead HEI but the lead HEI will be responsible for reporting to HEFCE (and any external organisation employed on its behalf) to monitor progress against the partnership's strategic and operational plans. As happens now, other staff may be appointed in other institutions that are funded to deliver the 2008-2011 plans. Any payment made to the chair (other than expenses) should be commensurate with duties undertaken and a good use of public funds.

56. We use the term Aimhigher co-ordinator because this appears to be the most common term in use, but we regard it as interchangeable with director/manager which are terms that are also in use. The Aimhigher co-ordinator will service the APC, act as the principal organiser/coordinator of Aimhigher activity and, on behalf of the APC, draft the reports required by the funders (eg the annual operational plan, the annual monitoring statement, financial returns, and evaluation plans and reports).

57. The lead HEI will be 'the banker' and an integral member of the partnership with specific responsibilities to ensure full accountability for funding. The lead HEI acts as the 'treasurer' for the APC. We will ask the lead HEI to certify on an annual basis that the Aimhigher funding held by the partnership (not including funding distributed to schools via the Department for Children, Schools and Families, DCSF) has been used for the purposes provided, and we will provide a pro forma and guidance note on this in due course. This is a procedure that will be familiar to HEIs in receipt of grant funding but will be adapted for Aimhigher purposes.

58. The lead HEI is not responsible for any financial irregularities in the management of funding allocated to others. Should such a circumstance arise it would be the responsibility of HEFCE to recover funding from the appropriate body. We have described this as an 'enhanced' and 'integrated' level of responsibility for Aimhigher funding by the lead HEI in contrast to the more arm's length relationship of existing Aimhigher bankers. We use this language to convey a shift of emphasis and not a new set of more onerous responsibilities that a lead HEI would assume. The lead HEI, on behalf of the APC, will need to be satisfied that Aimhigher resources have been used for the purposes provided; report to the APC and to HEFCE on funding; and ensure that any underspend is dealt with in an appropriate and timely fashion. The relationship between the APC and the lead HEI is the same as the relationship between any treasurer and the committee on which the treasurer serves.

### **National management of Aimhigher**

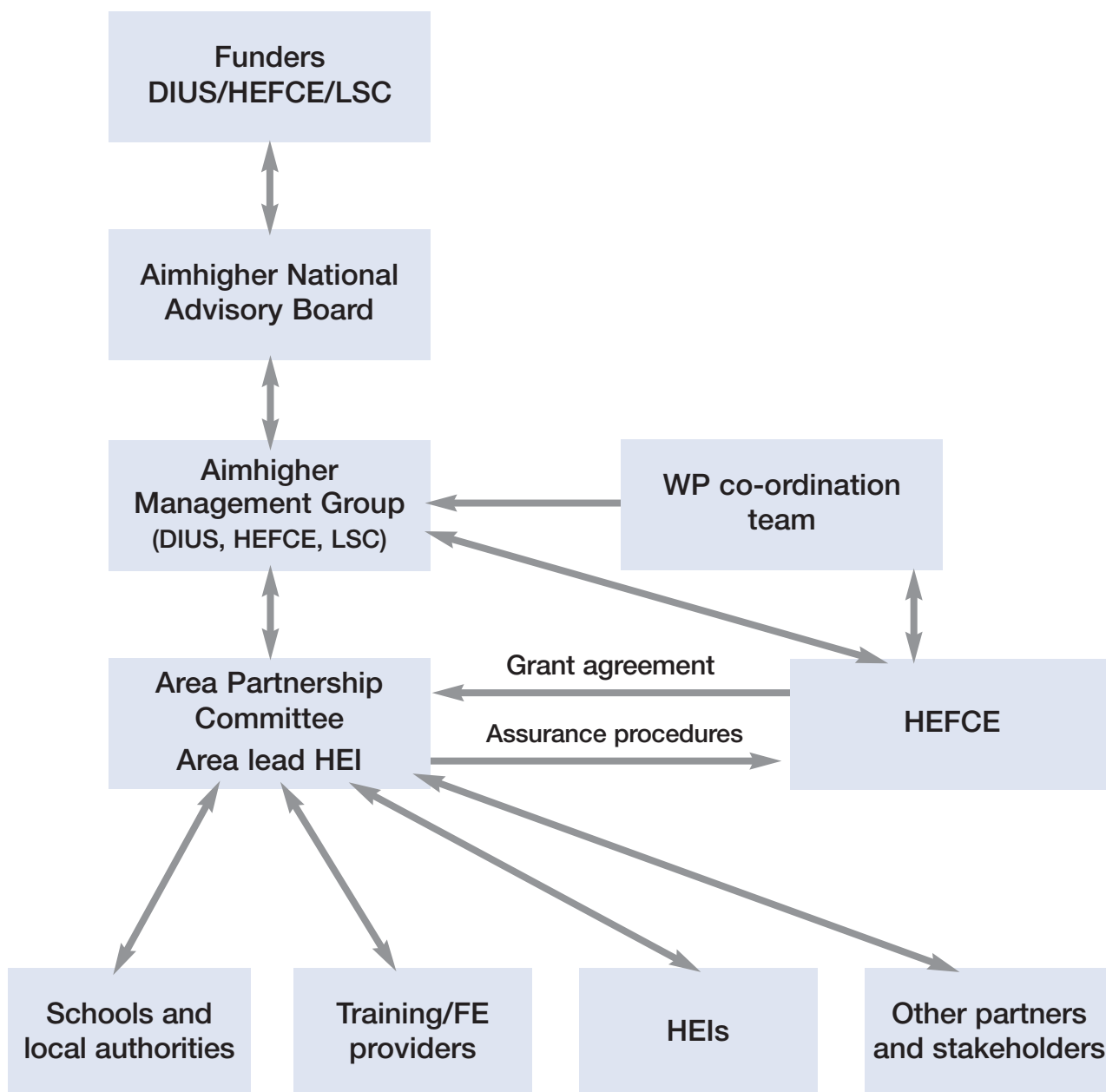
59. We have given careful consideration to whether we should continue with a National Partnership Board's role in the governance and management of the programme. However, we think we can now do this with a simpler management structure. We already have an Aimhigher Management Group (comprising members from HEFCE, LSC, DIUS, and the WP co-ordination team). We believe that the AMG should meet three times a year, when Aimhigher funding is to be distributed, to review progress and commission any action needed to support the programme.

60. At the same time we are conscious of the need to sustain the idea of Aimhigher as a national programme, with a wide sense of ownership. We will, therefore, establish an Aimhigher National Advisory Board that will meet once a year to consider a report on the programme from HEFCE and to offer advice to the funders on the further development of the programme. This will provide an opportunity to

review membership to ensure, for example, representation from DCSF as well as DIUS.

61. It is worth emphasising that we believe the changes we have set out are only possible because Aimhigher is a mature programme that is capable of being self-sustaining. Figure 1 shows the key elements and relationships in the new structure for Aimhigher.

Figure 1 **Aimhigher governance and management structure**



## Management in the transitional phase (February – July 2008)

62. We want to be absolutely confident that the new arrangements set out above are in place and 'ready to go' by the end of July 2008; there should be a smooth transition to the new phase of the programme on 1 August 2008.

### Areas

63. Until the end of July 2008 the existing structure should continue to function:

- a. Area steering groups should submit strategic and operational plans that include appropriate decisions about the allocation of funding.
- b. Regional Partnership Boards will continue to meet to review plans and report to the National Partnership Board.
- c. The National Partnership Board will continue to meet to approve plans as usual.

64. Area Partnership Committees may, of course, wish to make subsequent changes but this should be no different than the adjustments partnerships may have made in the earlier phases of the programme. The strong element of continuity for Area Partnerships should make a smooth transition possible provided a number of complementary steps are taken:

- a. The present ASG should seek a consensus on the 'lead HEI' and inform HEFCE of the outcome when it submits its plans for 2008-2011.
- b. The lead HEI will appoint the Aimhigher co-ordinator, taking into account the advice of the ASG. Ultimately, as with all appointments, the appointment is a matter for the employing body (the lead HEI) but we would expect the advice of the ASG to carry considerable weight and that changes

in this aspect of staff arrangements would be exceptional.

- c. Having drawn up the area strategic and operational plans and allocated funding (including decisions about services that Area Partnerships wish to support at regional level for example); and having achieved consensus on the lead HEI, the ASG will consider the staffing implications of the plan with the partner organisations employing staff that deliver the Aimhigher programme. This is a process ASGs/partner organisations would need to manage irrespective of organisational change when allocations for the new phase of the programme are determined. We do not believe it is appropriate for HEFCE to issue advice on this process.
- d. Finally, the ASG should advise the lead HEI and Aimhigher co-ordinator on the composition of the APC. We have stressed throughout this section the importance of continuity but clearly this provides an opportunity for partners to review and refresh their local partnership to ensure good, representative links.

65. Once the membership of the APC has been decided, the lead HEI will convene a meeting of the new APC at the earliest opportunity. Continuing the process initiated by the ASG (above), the APC will determine its terms of reference, review partnership relationships, appoint a chair and so on.

66. An essential element of Aimhigher partnership working has been the quality of co-ordination at Area Partnership, local authority, college, and school levels. We would encourage partnerships to ensure that appropriate arrangements, supported by funding, are made to enable this work to continue.



### **Area Partnership mergers**

67. In an Aimhigher briefing paper issued in November 2007 we asked existing Area Partnerships to consider whether a merger with neighbouring ones would be a sensible step, given the resources at their disposal. We acknowledge that this is a complex question and that much depends on geography and local identities as well as resource. We will identify Area Partnerships where a merger could be sensible and hold informal discussions with them. We would also like to hear from Area Partnerships that have already initiated such conversations.

68. We believe that mergers could bring the present 45 Area Partnerships to below 40 but we hope to proceed on the basis of consent. Because of this we are not setting deadlines, and do not require any decisions in the Area Partnership strategic plans and budgets. If/when Area Partnerships wish to merge we will discuss appropriate timescales and practical issues. We would work on the simple assumption that the Area Partnerships would pool the resources allocated to them.

### **Regional or collaborative activity**

69. With the cessation of central funding for regions, Area Partnerships may wish to work together to provide or commission Aimhigher activities/services collectively. In some cases, this may be on a regional basis; and in other cases a number of Area Partnerships, but not the whole region, might combine to provide activities/services. In the rest of this section, for the sake of simplicity, we shall refer to 'regional activity'.

70. We will ask HEFCE regional consultants, supported by Action on Access, to arrange a meeting of Area Partnerships within each region (we propose a maximum of four people from each) to decide which activities/services they wish to provide at regional level, if any. The meeting will be for the area partnership representatives (from

the existing ASGs) only but we will ask regional consultants to ensure that appropriate information (from stakeholders and colleagues) is available to them. We expect the existing regional partnerships to submit a written report outlining the range of existing activity/services provided at regional level, and put forward whatever recommendations they wish to make. Similarly stakeholders (Regional Development Agencies, and other local/regional organisations) may wish to offer advice. Naturally we would encourage the maximum amount of informal contact and discussion prior to the meeting.

71. Area Partnership meetings should take place in February/March 2008 so that they can contribute to the strategic plan of each Area Partnership. It may be sensible for the meeting to establish a working party to determine the detail of any 'in principle' decision made. The working party would make an estimate of the cost of providing agreed activities/services – the advice of the region will be important here – and the amount from each Area Partnership budget that would be pooled to provide it. The working party would also make recommendations about how such services would be delivered. For example, it could decide that discrete activities/services should be commissioned on a regional basis from different institutions, or that a package of such services should be commissioned from the same institution. The meeting could either delegate these matters to the working group for decision or reconvene to receive and agree a report.

72. HEFCE will only fund Area Partnerships. It will therefore be necessary for Area Partnerships to make the appropriate funding agreements and transfers to support work they deliver or commission collectively.

73. Similarly, we want one Area Partnership-based reporting stream. We expect that any service or activity that Area Partnerships deliver or

commission collectively will be included by each Area Partnership in its monitoring and evaluation returns. Each may do so, of course, by referring to, or including as reference, region-wide reports. We will task the external consultants we commission to report on plans, monitoring and evaluation to take account of this in their analysis.

74. We accept that the decisions made may not be simple ones to implement and that Area Partnerships would undoubtedly prefer more time. The timescales are necessarily tight because we could not begin this process until Government had announced post-2008 funding for Aimhigher and plans have to be submitted by mid-May 2008 in order for them to be approved in time for implementation.

75. The Aimhigher HEFCE/European Social Fund (ESF) part-funded summer schools programme is scheduled for completion on 31 October 2008. Regional partnerships have been asked to conclude all activity by 31 July 2008 with the final submission of project closure reports and final claims by 31 August 2008. However, it is likely that there will be financial enquiry or audit activity after 31 August 2008 and so HEFCE will make summer school transition funding available to current regional banker institutions. This transition funding will ensure that the Aimhigher HEFCE/ESF part-funded summer schools co-ordination role can continue until 31 October 2008 as well as providing opportunities to run additional summer schools up to 31 July 2008.

76. We are acutely aware that there are consequences for staffing – for people – that follow from the decisions that we are asking partnerships to make. HEIs, colleges and other partners employing staff on regional programmes will have to review staffing in the light of the budget and the way it is allocated by Area

Partnerships. When we have the outcome of the decisions of the Area Partnerships on regional/collective activity at the end of March 2008 we will write to regional bankers and regional partnership managers to update them and ask them to advise us of the steps that have been taken in respect of staff and existing regional activity.

77. Beyond what is said above it is not appropriate for HEFCE to issue advice on staffing matters in this area of activity or any other of the very many programmes that are HEFCE funded. Partnerships and the institutions employing staff to deliver partnership plans must make appropriate staffing decisions in the light of the resources available to them.

## **The targeting process**

78. In May 2007 HEFCE published 'Higher Education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners' (HEFCE 2007/12). This document set out the rationale, principles and methodology for targeting learners for Aimhigher and other widening participation activity provided by HEIs. The target group was clearly identified as young people from lower socio-economic groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who live in areas of relative deprivation where participation in higher education is low.

79. The targeting guidance (HEFCE 2007/12) advised partnerships on how they might best target participants. We would like to take this opportunity to confirm with Aimhigher partnerships that Children in Care/Care Leavers should also be targeted, given their very low HE participation rates and the positioning of issues affecting these in the Government's 'Care Matters: Time for Change' White Paper<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Care Matters: Time for Change' (DfES 2007) is available at [www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/timeforchange/)

## Targeting data

80. We have listened carefully to what Aimhigher partnerships have said about the use of data in targeting and the view that HEFCE should provide more prescriptive guidance on 'the first stage' of targeting, that is to say the use of data sets to identify schools/colleges and communities where work should be focused. When the work by HEFCE analysts updating data on participation in small areas is fully completed we will recommend a 'model' for Area Partnerships to adopt but in the meantime an initial data set is available on the HEFCE web-site<sup>12</sup>. However no model can be a complete substitute for local knowledge, and we encourage partnerships to draw upon this. A measure of inconsistency that has the feeling of fairness is better than consistency that is inflexible and rigid.

## Key considerations

81. In the meantime we remind partnerships of two key considerations. First, that targeting requires a series of steps (or stages):

- a. Identifying target schools, colleges and communities.
- b. Engaging in dialogue with teachers (and parents) to identify individuals from the target community to engage in activity.
- c. Collecting data from participants to check how successful targeting has been.

The second consideration follows from the first: targeting is an iterative process. It proceeds on the basis of recruiting-checking-recruiting from a more informed position and so on.

## Summer schools

82. We have already stated our arrangements to ensure the completion of all returns relating to summer schools up to July 2008 (paragraph 75)

most importantly returns relating to ESF-funded summer schools. There will be some transitional funding to enable partnerships to make some additional summer schools available to July 2008 and to ensure full reporting by October 2008.

83. HEFCE will make £3.3 million available for summer schools in 2008-09 and also in 2009-10. In addition there will be £1.75 million available in each of these two years to match funding for additional summer school provision offered by Aimhigher partnerships or HEIs. We will publish separate guidance for summer schools by 31 July 2008 with further details of funding and proposals for matched funding together with a report on progress with arrangements for the use of an electronic applications process.

## Healthcare strand

84. Funding for the healthcare strand is confirmed for the academic year 2008-09 and will be distributed as a 'ring fenced' allocation to Area Partnerships. However, Area partnerships will need to consider the role of strategic health authorities in their plans for the healthcare strand. Discussions are continuing with the Department of Health and other stakeholders for the academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11. We will update partnerships when these discussions are completed.

## Funding 2008 to 2011

85. The funding allocations to Aimhigher Area Partnerships for 2008-2011 are set out in the table at Annex A. The total funding available for distribution is £239.5 million. Partnerships should note that funding is allocated from budgets available in a given financial year. However, we have provisionally allocated funding across the whole period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2011 to ensure full coverage of the three academic years 2008-2011. Funding in 2008-09 (including

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<sup>12</sup> Updated young participation area classification (POLAR2) is available at [www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/polar/polar2/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/polar/polar2/)

funding for summer schools and the healthcare strand) will be £78.0 million. Funding for 2009-10, and 2010-11 will be confirmed when budgets for the relevant financial years are confirmed.

However, Area Partnerships should produce their three-year plans based on these figures.

### **Funding formula**

86. In the past, funding for Aimhigher has been allocated using a formula that combines two area-based measures, attainment at age 16 and participation in higher education, with both factors weighted to reflect lower attainment and participation. We propose to continue with this formula, using information on attainment in the maintained sector and updated information on participation. More complete data on individual attainment for all 16 year-olds (in all sectors) will be available for use from 2009-10.

87. Funding allocations for Aimhigher partnerships have been driven by this formula since 2004. However, between 2004 and 2006 actual allocations were also determined by the commitments inherited from earlier programmes (Aimhigher Excellence Challenge and Partnerships for Progression), and from 2006 allocations were 'smoothed' to manage a reduction in funding and to avoid changes in funding that would have a destabilising effect.

88. If the formula described above was applied without any qualification for 2008-2011 there would be large gains for some partnerships and losses for others, on a scale that would be unmanageable at Area Partnership level. We believe that there must be a shift in funding to reflect needs as defined by the formula but that these should be introduced gradually to provide partnerships with time to make changes to their plans. We have therefore allocated funding to ensure that no Area Partnership receives less in 2008-09 than 90 per cent of their allocation in 2007-08. That guarantee will reduce to 85 per

cent in 2009-10, and to 80 per cent in 2010-11. If there is further funding for Aimhigher from 2011, we will consider at that stage what further steps can be taken.

### **Area funding allocations**

89. As we set out in the earlier section on management in the transitional phase, ASGs will agree the amount of funding to be set aside:

- for distribution to schools by DCSF via local authorities through the Standards Fund. Funding for schools should include funding allocated to academies and trust schools where these are Aimhigher target schools
- for Aimhigher activities managed by partners
- for activity or services to be provided at a regional level (ie in association with other Area Partnerships).

### **Funding for schools**

90. Once agreed by the ASG, funding for schools will be distributed by the DCSF via local authorities through the Standards Fund. Under plans set out in 'A New Relationship with Schools' (Ofsted/DfES 2004) this funding is not 'ring-fenced' so there can be no *requirement* for schools to provide plans about how this funding will be used, nor can there be a *requirement* that schools report on spending or evaluate its uses. This has been a matter of concern for a number of partnerships for some time. Area Partnerships can adjust allocations to individual institutions of any type that do not use them effectively but this is difficult to ascertain without adequate information. However, it should be noted that Area Partnerships will not be able to make in-year changes to allocations made to schools via the DCSF and local authorities.

91. Despite these concerns, partnership links remain strong. In practice, close working

relationships mean that many schools do share their plans and work with Area Partnerships to report and evaluate activity. We strongly encourage this. We believe that partnerships cannot properly assess the impact of the programme without feedback from schools to tell them about the effects for learners. In the same way we strongly encourage all partners – schools, colleges and HEIs – to share and to integrate plans for activity. Our aim is that Aimhigher becomes an acknowledged and valued support for school improvement plans. This cannot happen without close and co-operative working.

#### **Funding for national activity**

92. Funding has been set aside to continue activity provided centrally. This includes:

- the national communications strategy, including the Aimhigher Roadshow
- external audit, monitoring and review of Area Partnership plans
- the national evaluation strategy
- the national co-ordination team.

#### **Submission of strategic plans for 2008-2011 including annual operational plans**

93. By 14 May 2008, Area Partnerships will need to submit revised strategic plans covering the period 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2011 and an operational plan for the period 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009. Aimhigher Area Partnerships should take the opportunity to review and build on the achievements to date and refocus activities to address issues arising from the emphasis on sharper targeting and changing responsibilities placed on APCs. In a change from previous

years, we require Area Partnerships to submit an annual operational plan, against which we will monitor progress against agreed targets and milestones. This will give a clearer measure of progress towards the objectives of partnerships and provide a closer link to financial spending profiles and planning.

94. We have provided a downloadable template for Area Partnerships to use when writing their 2008/2011 strategic plans and annual operational plans (see Annex B).

95. During the planning phase, Area Partnerships should give due consideration to the recommendations contained in the Aimhigher cost study report.<sup>13</sup> Partnerships should use the cost guidance which accompanied this report when devising their activity plans.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Strategic objectives**

96. Partnerships should complete the template provided setting out in summary form the partnership's strategic objectives, the indicators of success associated with these, and a timescale for delivery. This template also requires a brief statement setting out an overall vision and an indication of strategic priorities. In particular this statement should address:

- ways in which the partnership will develop co-ordinated programmes for learners with partner schools, colleges and HEIs (with regard to the learner progression framework)
- how the partnership will develop its relationships with schools, colleges, and other FE providers, including training providers, and in particular how its relationships with schools will support school improvement plans

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<sup>13</sup> 'Aimhigher Resource Costs: A Case Study Approach' – York Consulting Ltd (Research Report 841 - DfES 2007) available at [www.Aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner](http://www.Aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner)

<sup>14</sup> 'A Guide to Costing Aimhigher Activities' – York Consulting Ltd (DfES 2007) available at [www.Aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner](http://www.Aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner)

- the ways in which the partnership will implement the targeting guidelines (selection of schools/colleges, identification of participants, participant data to be recorded)
- how the partnership's strategy and its associated actions (which will be the central plank of the plan) will be underpinned by evidence (to be detailed in the evaluation plan).

### **Strategic plans in detail**

97. We have provided a downloadable template at Annex B for Area Partnerships to use for returning details of their strategic and operational plans. This includes:

- a. Contact details for the partnership, and details of the membership of the APC.
- b. Strategic objectives and activities to be provided by the Area Partnerships in 2008-2011.
- c. Activities to be provided through collaboration between Area Partnerships.
- d. The budget allocated to each broad target activity and total allocation. This will include:
  - the funds to be allocated to schools via the DCSF/local authorities and
  - funding allocated to partners to deliver elements of the plan.

98. Where appropriate, plans should refer to local, regional and national plans of other related agencies and/or initiatives.

99. The annual operational plan will be submitted within the template provided in Annex B. As a minimum the annual operational plans need to provide details of:

- planning targets based on the broad activity headings, and must include measurable targets, with the number of activities expected to be delivered

- funding to be allocated under each activity heading, split across the three payment branches to reflect the expected level of activity (August 2008, December 2008 and April 2009).

100. The planning cycle for annual operational plans and monitoring statements will take place again in 2009-10 and 2010-11. The strategic plan and annual operational plans must demonstrate that a process of discussion and negotiation has taken place with schools, FE providers, HEIs and others involved in the delivery of the plan.

101. The new arrangements for Aimhigher will start on 1 August 2008. A strategic plan and an annual operational plan for 2008-09 are required from each Area Partnership by 14 May 2008. As mentioned in paragraph 11 we are moving to a web-based method for monitoring annual operational plans and for the submission of interim financial returns.

102. Further details about the submission of monitoring returns electronically will be made available to partnerships by 30 April 2008 (see paragraph 105). The Area Partnership strategic plan for 2008-2011, including the operational plan for 2008-09 should be submitted to HEFCE by the existing Area Steering Group in the usual way by e-mailing aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk.

103. By 1 August 2008 we expect that:

- a. Area Partnership Committees will be established for each area and a lead HEI agreed. Membership, governance and management arrangements will have been reviewed to ensure that they meet the needs of the partnerships in the next phase of Aimhigher. These arrangements include any Area Partnerships that have agreed to merge to make better use of smaller Aimhigher budgets.

- b. Each Area Partnership will have an agreed strategic plan for 2008-2011 and an annual operational plan for 2008-09.

104. Questions about the planning process can be e-mailed to [aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk) or partnerships can contact us by telephone on 0117 931 7467.

## Schedule for planning, monitoring and reporting the Aimhigher programme

Action required	Date for completion
Area Steering Group agrees new area lead HEI and reports to HEFCE Each Area Steering Group decides which services might be provided collectively and nominates four representatives for meetings to discuss collectives	End February 2008
HEFCE regional consultants convene meetings of Area Steering Groups to agree collective services required (if any)	During February/March 2008
Decision on collective service providers agreed and communicated to HEFCE regional consultant	31 March 2008
2008-2011 strategic plan completed and e-mailed to HEFCE 2008-09 annual operational plan completed and e-mailed to HEFCE	14 May 2008
Plans approved	6 June 2008
HEFCE provides grant agreements to area lead HEIs	30 June 2008
Regional Partnerships submit final monitoring and evaluation report for 2007-08 Area Partnerships submit evaluation plans All 2006-2008 Aimhigher HEFCE/ESF joint funded summer school activity ends HEFCE publication on future of summer schools	31 July 2008
<b>Area Partnership Committee begins implementation of new strategic plan</b>	<b>1 August 2008</b>
Project closure report and final claims for 2006-2008 HEFCE/ESF joint funded Aimhigher summer school activity submitted to HEFCE	1 September 2008
Area Partnerships submit final monitoring and evaluation reports for the period 2007-08	30 September 2008
Project closure report and final claim submitted to ESF by HEFCE	31 October 2008
Area financial report submitted for 1 August 2008 to 30 November 2008	8 December 2008
Area financial report submitted for 1 December 2008 to 31 March 2009	8 April 2009
Area financial report submitted for 1 April 2009 to 31 July 2009	8 August 2009
Annual evaluation report for 2008-09 submitted	7 September 2009 and annually thereafter
Annual monitoring statement for 2008-09 submitted	30 September 2009 and annually thereafter



## Monitoring 2008 to 2011

105. We will adopt an approach similar to that used by HEFCE regional teams to collect information from institutions, through an Aimhigher annual monitoring statement to be submitted by 30 September each year. We will set this up through the HEFCE extranet and Aimhigher Area Partnerships will have access to log their responses directly onto the system. We will look at the returns and follow these up where necessary. The form will be a very simple one: it will simply record whether the funds are being used on schedule for the activities set out in the plans. It will ask whether objectives are being achieved, and will request a brief statement on the key achievements for the year; that too can be uploaded to our extranet. In addition we will ask for a very limited amount of 'headline information' about volumes of activity delivered under 'key interventions'.

106. We will not ask about impact in the monitoring return. We will expect an analysis of impact in the evaluation report (see next section).

107. We will create a similar mechanism for 'in year' financial monitoring. In 2006-07 we asked partnerships for a financial update prior to releasing the next Aimhigher allocation. We will continue this practice in the new phase of the programme using a web-based system for a standardised return. We will no longer make adjustments to funding within the year, but no partnership will be allowed to carry forward more than 15 per cent in excess of its annual allocation at the end of the year. Funding in excess of 15 per cent that is retained at the end of the year will be redistributed across all the Area Partnerships or, at the discretion of the AMG, used to fund special projects.

108. We will circulate further information when these systems are ready.

## Evaluation 2008 to 2011

109. Annex D sets out further guidance on evaluation for Aimhigher for the period 2008-2011. Evidence generated at national level from funders and evidence generated locally from partnerships are intimately connected and need to be considered together. The purpose of the additional guidance is to communicate the funders' expectations of partnerships and to set out what partnerships can reasonably expect of HEFCE and DIUS.

110. Area Partnerships will be required to put in place an evaluation plan by the end of this academic year (July 2008), taking account of the guidance provided by the Aimhigher Evidence Good Practice Group<sup>15</sup> and the programme of evaluation capacity building provided by the Centre for the Study of Education and Training (CSET), Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. This evaluation plan should be submitted to HEFCE by 31 July 2008.

Although the plan will be submitted three months after Area Partnerships submit their strategic plans, we expect Area Partnerships to ensure that, collectively or individually, they commit sufficient resource to evaluation to be able to meet the funders' expectations.

111. Although Annexes C and D refer to specific activities, we wish to emphasise the importance of learner outcomes, however these are achieved. Clearly the outcomes of the learner progression framework are key. On the other hand, planning and monitoring (and the ensuing distribution of resources) will have 'activities' at their core. Similarly, in evaluating the outcomes for learners of a package of activities over time such as the learner

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<sup>15</sup> 'Measuring success – A guide to evaluation for Aimhigher' Sue Hatt – Aimhigher Evidence Good Practice Group (2007) available from: [www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme\\_information/monitoring\\_and\\_evaluation/good\\_practice\\_guide.cfm](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/programme_information/monitoring_and_evaluation/good_practice_guide.cfm)

progression framework, partnerships will need to be able to say what activities, or combination of activities, contributed most to the positive outcomes. Evaluation is not simply an evaluation of discrete activities, but a robust evaluation cannot be done without reference to them.

112. Evaluation plans submitted by Area Partnerships should include:

- a. A brief summary of the aspects of the partnership's strategic plan which will be the focus of evaluation. (There is no expectation that a partnership should evaluate everything.)
- b. An evaluation schedule for the period 2008-2011 indicating:
  - i. The key aspects of the strategic plan to be evaluated.
  - ii. When the selected key aspects of the strategic plan will be evaluated.
  - iii. The focus for the evaluation, for example outcomes for learners, schools, colleges, HEIs, teachers, parents or other stakeholders.
  - iv. Whether the evaluation will be at area, school, college, learner or some other level.
  - v. The methodology to be used.
  - vi. The data that will be used or recorded.
  - vii. The likely cost of evaluation for each element in the plan.
- c. The steps that will be taken to ensure that data sharing protocols have been agreed between partners and that parental consent for the use of learner data has been secured.

# Annex A

## Aimhigher funding to Area Partnerships 2008 to 2011

This table shows the funding allocations for the academic years 2008-2011. Funding for summer schools is ring-fenced and is confirmed for academic years 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Ring-fenced funding for the healthcare strand is confirmed for academic year 2008-09 and discussions are continuing with the Department of Health and other stakeholders for the academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11. We will update partnerships when these discussions are completed.

	<b>Area</b>	<b>2007-08 £</b>	<b>2008-09 £</b>	<b>2009-10 £</b>	<b>2010-11 £</b>	<b>Additional annual healthcare allocation (2008-09) £</b>	<b>Additional annual summer schools allocation (2008-09 and 2009-10) £</b>
<b>East Midlands</b>	Derbyshire	1,229,732	1,330,239	1,425,506	1,495,208	36,965	67,769
	Leicestershire	1,134,866	1,072,248	1,079,125	1,078,315	28,084	51,488
	Lincolnshire and Rutland	678,723	617,297	625,324	625,695	16,246	29,785
	Northamptonshire	597,392	775,124	889,758	933,059	22,591	41,416
	Nottinghamshire	1,815,549	1,930,237	2,066,400	2,166,761	53,595	98,257
<b>East of England</b>	Bedfordshire and Luton	706,579	672,760	677,366	677,116	17,628	32,318
	Cambridgeshire	614,393	726,184	793,741	832,758	20,458	37,507
	Essex	1,891,071	1,952,128	2,053,814	2,154,952	53,573	98,217
	Hertfordshire	665,638	599,074	£609,459	639,249	16,068	29,457
	Norfolk	867,679	992,989	1,063,934	1,115,900	27,590	50,581
	Suffolk	461,525	556,532	641,864	707,474	16,573	30,383
<b>London</b>	London Central*	920,435	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
	London East	2,625,813	2,363,232	2,231,941	2,100,650	58,225	106,745
	London North	1,728,068	1,555,261	1,468,858	1,382,454	38,318	70,250
	London South	£948,880	853,992	806,548	759,104	21,040	38,574
	London South East	2,554,391	2,298,952	2,171,232	2,043,513	56,641	103,842
	London West	1,894,129	1,704,716	1,610,010	1,515,303	42,000	77,000
<b>North East</b>	County Durham	862,997	835,781	850,066	888,925	22,389	41,047
	Northumberland	287,568	369,622	403,593	423,339	10,405	19,075
	Tees Valley	2,048,492	1,843,643	1,741,218	1,638,794	45,423	83,276
	Tyne and Wear	3,181,549	2,863,394	2,704,317	2,545,239	70,547	129,337

\* Note that funding for Aimhigher Central London will be confirmed separately

	Area	2007-08 £	2008-09 £	2009-10 £	2010-11 £	Additional annual healthcare allocation (2008-09) £	Additional annual summer schools allocation (2008-09 and 2009-10) £
North West	Cheshire and Warrington	637,089	793,649	850,368	891,909	22,052	40,428
	Cumbria	539,935	581,727	623,179	653,581	16,161	29,628
	Greater Manchester	5,336,051	4,802,446	4,535,643	4,427,069	119,697	219,445
	Greater Merseyside	4,818,691	4,336,822	4,095,887	3,854,953	106,849	195,890
	Lancashire	2,126,531	1,921,656	1,957,478	2,052,808	51,582	94,567
South East	Berkshire	511,330	460,197	434,631	411,265	11,357	20,822
	Hampshire & the Isle of Wight	1,381,092	1,795,420	2,079,243	2,180,901	52,657	96,538
	Kent and Medway	2,168,344	1,951,510	1,938,545	1,939,010	50,688	92,927
	Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire	1,031,288	928,159	924,855	924,181	24,150	44,274
	Surrey	337,666	371,433	392,197	396,286	10,086	18,491
	Sussex	907,634	1,179,924	1,416,944	1,576,369	36,289	66,530
South West	LIFE	642,654	643,310	689,313	722,994	17,875	32,771
	PENINSULA	1,348,168	1,459,284	1,564,009	1,640,553	40,555	74,351
	WEST	2,065,694	2,487,619	2,664,949	2,794,985	69,109	126,700
West Midlands	Birmingham and Solihull	3,559,136	3,203,222	3,025,266	2,847,309	78,920	144,687
	Coventry and Warwickshire	692,156	761,372	851,992	929,045	22,108	40,531
	Herefordshire & Worcestershire	546,841	567,125	607,035	636,486	15,745	28,865
	Shropshire	435,153	447,000	479,352	502,900	12,428	22,785
	Staffordshire	1,504,039	1,507,679	1,616,191	1,695,390	41,907	76,829
	The Black Country	2,317,965	2,086,169	2,075,872	2,173,229	55,089	100,997
Yorkshire & the Humber	Humberside	1,996,052	1,796,447	1,696,644	1,710,741	45,251	82,960
	North Yorkshire	299,488	377,928	419,085	439,486	10,752	19,712
	South Yorkshire	3,719,277	3,347,349	3,161,385	3,028,267	82,930	152,039
	West Yorkshire	4,945,287	4,450,758	4,203,494	4,110,127	110,995	203,490
	<b>Total</b>	<b>71,583,030</b>	<b>69,000,000</b>	<b>69,000,000</b>	<b>69,000,000</b>	<b>1,800,000</b>	<b>3,300,000</b>

# Annex B

## Aimhigher Area strategic and operational plan template

Please download this template in Word from the HEFCE web-site, where it is published with this report, under [Publications](#). Complete and return by e-mail to aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk, by Wednesday 14 May 2008. (Boxes can be expanded to desired length.)

### Aimhigher Area Strategic Plan 2008 to 2011

#### 1 Contact details:

Name of Area Partnership: address:  
tel:  
e-mail:  
web-site (if applicable):

Area Partnership lead HEI:

Contact details for lead HEI: address:  
tel:  
e-mail:

Contact details for area co-ordinator  
at lead HEI: address:  
tel:  
e-mail:

Name of Area Partnership: address:  
tel:  
e-mail:

#### 2 Partnership vision and strategic priorities (see paragraph 96) (500 words max)

#### 3 Strategic objectives 2008-2011

Strategic objective	Indicators of success	Timescale

#### 4 Learner progression framework

Please provide details of the partnership's plans for the use of the Aimhigher learner progression framework or similar arrangement for the provision of sequenced activities as part of an individual learner's transition curriculum. *(250 words max)*

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#### 5 Evaluation

Please briefly outline the key elements of the Area Partnership evaluation plan.

Please note: HEFCE will request a more detailed evaluation plan to be presented by 31 July 2008. At this stage we only require a brief description of intentions.

Aspect of the strategic plan to be evaluated	Brief description of methodology <i>(100 words max per item)</i>	Who will do this work?	Estimated cost £000s

## 6 Aimhigher Area Partnership Budget 2008-2011

Please provide an indication of the funding to be allocated to deliver the partnership's strategic objectives.

<b>Budget heading</b>	<b>Indicative budget 2008-09 £000s</b>	<b>Indicative budget 2009-10 £000s</b>	<b>Indicative budget 2010-11 £000s</b>
Campus visits			
Mentoring			
Master classes (from revision to subject enrichment)			
Student ambassadors			
Information, advice and guidance (IAG) activities			
Aimhigher summer schools (HEFCE funded)			
Funding for schools, (including academies and trusts) and local authorities for specific programme (where agreed)*			
Funding for colleges, training/FE provider for specific programme (where agreed)**			
Healthcare strand			
Staff development			
Evaluation			
Area management			
Costs of lead HEI			
Other category (or categories; please specify)			
Total of above			
Total Aimhigher funding available			

\* A separate workbook will be provided by HEFCE for partnerships to indicate the funding to be deducted at source by DIUS and then passed to schools and local authorities through the DCSF Standards Fund. It will be the responsibility of the Area Partnership Committee to inform each partner local authority and school of the funding which has been allocated by the Area Partnership Committee on an annual basis.

\*\* It is the responsibility of the Area Partnership Committee to inform partner colleges of funding allocations and to advise its lead HEI to make these payments.

## 7 Composition of the Area Partnership Committee

Name	Organisation	Contact details

## 8 Aimhigher activities to be provided collectively in association with other Area Partnerships

Please provide details of activities which will be provided collectively in association with other areas\*.

Activity to be provided in association with other providers	Indicative budget 2008-09 £000s	Indicative budget 2009-10 £000s	Indicative budget 2010-11 £000s	Name of provider of collective service

\* **Please note:** Figures given here should have already been included in the budget statement given at 6 above.

It will be the responsibility of the Area Partnerships commissioning the collective service to develop contractual arrangements with the collective service provider. Please provide details of the way in which the collective service provider will report to the Area Partnership.



## 9 Strategic planning process

Please describe the process used to draft this plan? *(Max 250 words)*

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Where appropriate, please give details of other plans referred to when drafting this plan.  
*(Max 250 words)*

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Please list the key partners who signed off this plan

Contact	Institution/organisation/agency

## 10 Area Partnership operational plan template 2008-09

Please complete the Area Partnership operational plan for 2008-09 in the following table. Area Partnerships will be required to report against the annual operational plan in interim or annual monitoring statements.

Budget heading	Estimated total funding for year	Indicative activity targets	No. of beneficiaries (where applicable)
Campus visits			
Mentoring			
Master classes (from revision to subject enrichment)			
Student ambassadors			
IAG activities			
Summer schools (HEFCE funded)			
Funding for schools/local authorities			
Funding for colleges, training/FE provider			
Healthcare strand			
Staff development			
Evaluation			
Area management			
Costs of lead HEI			
Other category (or categories; please specify)			
Total without funding to schools/local authorities			
Total including funding to schools/local authorities			

## 11 Operational planning by group/outcome/activity type

Please also report planned outcomes in the format given below which uses stages in learners' experience and outcomes rather than activity. This method of presentation will be useful to partnerships when considering their evaluation plans. Area partnerships should complete the table below for 2008-09 to indicate the allocation of resources by group/year type, related activities and expected learner outcomes.

Please try to define learner outcomes as you think appropriate.

It is accepted that defining learner outcomes for whole cohorts/year groups will probably be at quite a high level. We draw attention particularly to the key transition points at:

- year 9
- year 11
- on exit from the 14-19 phase of learning.

Partnerships may wish to focus on these three key transition points rather than attempt learner outcomes for all year groups.

This is the first time we have asked partnerships to report in this way and we will be grateful for your best efforts. We have included this table to reflect the importance of planning and outcomes of the programme as a whole in the context of the learner progression framework. We will review the format of this table for reporting for 2009-10.

<b>Group type (year group/cohort)</b>	<b>Learner outcomes</b>	<b>Associated activities</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Year 9 (Options year)			
Year 10			
Year 11 (Choosing post-16 futures)			
Year 12			
Year 13			
Work based learners			
Exit from 14-19 phase			
Other groups			

# Annex C

## Aimhigher annual monitoring statement template

This template is an example of the annual monitoring statement which will be available via the HEFCE extranet for you to show the progress made in 2008-09 towards delivering the activities set out in the Area Partnership's annual operational plan (see paragraphs 102 and 105).

Do not fill in this version.

Budget heading	Total expenditure for year £000s (Estimated)	Total expenditure for year £000s (Actual)	Number of activities provided* (Actual)	No. of beneficiaries*
Campus visits (1)				
Mentoring (2)				
Master classes (from revision to subject enrichment) (3)				
Student ambassadors (4)				
IAG activities (5)				
Aimhigher summer schools (HEFCE funded) (6)				
Funding for schools/local authorities (7)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Funding for colleges, training/FE provider (8)				
Healthcare strand (9)				
Staff development activity (10)				
Evaluation (11)				
Area management				
Costs of lead HEI				
Other category (or categories; please specify) (12)				
<b>Total</b>				
Underspend/overspend (13)				

\* Where applicable

**1 Campus visits (generic)**

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to activities based on Aimhigher campus visits (generic)?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

**2 Mentoring (face to face or electronic)**

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to mentoring activities?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

**3 Master classes (from revision to subject enrichment)**

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to activities based on master classes, subject enrichment or revision sessions?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

#### 4 Student ambassadors

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to the provision of student ambassadors?

Yes/No/In part

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

Comment (100 words maximum)

#### 5 Information, advice and guidance activities (IAG)

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to the provision of IAG activities?

Yes/No/In part

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

Comment (100 words maximum)

#### 6 Aimhigher summer schools (HEFCE funded)

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to summer schools and other HE related residential experiences?

Yes/No/In part

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

Comment (100 words maximum)

**7 Funding for schools, (including academies and trusts) and local authorities for specific programme (where agreed)**

(Note: It is accepted that partnerships cannot require this information to be provided by schools)

- Have you been able to obtain information from schools about the use of funding for school based Aimhigher activity?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

**8 Funding for colleges, training/FE provider for specific programme (where agreed)**

- Have you been able to obtain information from colleges/training /FE providers about the use of funding for Aimhigher activity?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

**9 Healthcare strand**

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to the healthcare strand?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

## 10 Staff development

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to staff development?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

## 11 Evaluation

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to evaluation activity?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**

## 12 Other category (or categories; please specify)

- Have you delivered the targets and objectives for 2008-09 in relation to other categories of Aimhigher activity?

**Yes/No/In part**

- If no, please provide reason for slippage and describe proposed remedy.

**Comment (100 words maximum)**



### 13 Financial details

Aimhigher [partnership] was allocated [£ ] by HEFCE for 2008-09. Partnerships are permitted to carry forward no more than 15 per cent of their annual allocation to 2009-10. Any unspent funds in excess of 15 per cent will be held back from the partnership and recycled through the total Aimhigher allocation.

- Are there any significant funds which remain unspent at the end of academic year 2008-09 (31 July 2009)?

#### Yes/No

If you answered 'Yes' to question 13, please give the amount that will be carried over to 2009-10 (up to 15 per cent of the allocation) and any funds that will be recovered by HEFCE.

£ to be carried forward \_\_\_\_\_

Response made by

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Status \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Annex D

## Additional guidance on evaluation

### Evaluation 2008-2011

1. This guidance should be read together with the advice to partnerships from the Aimhigher Evidence Good Practice Group (Aimhigher 2007), and in the context of the programme being run between January and June 2008 by the Centre for the Study of Education and Training (CSET), Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. Evidence generated at national level from funders and evidence generated locally from partnerships is intimately connected, and need to be considered together. The purpose of this guidance is to communicate the funders' expectations of partnerships and to set out what partnerships can reasonably expect of funders and DIUS.
2. Aimhigher operates alongside a wide range of other initiatives and programmes which contribute to the widening participation agenda. Given the interplay of the existing and forthcoming activities, it is difficult to identify a discrete 'Aimhigher effect'. In addition, the fact that the programme operates comprehensively across England implies that there are no readily identifiable control groups.

### National evaluation

3. The national evaluation has used, and will continue to use, quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the impact of widening participation in general and of the Aimhigher programme in particular. The Government looks to national data sets to identify what progress is being made to change the social composition of the HE community. The main data considered are:
  - a. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate, which shows annually the proportion of 18-30 year-olds participating in HE.
  - b. The Full-Time Young Participation by Socio-economic Classification (FYPSEC) measure, also published annually – this uses data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the LSC, Labour Force

Survey data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the ONS and Government Actuary's Department population data and HEFCE's own area-based participation data. FYPSEC shows, for England, the participation rates of young people from the top three (NS-SEC 1 to 3) and bottom four (NS-SEC 4 to 7) socio-economic classifications. Both groups inform the widening participation debate, as does, more importantly, the gap which exists between the two participation rates.

- c. HESA's annual performance indicators on HE entrants from state schools, lower socio-economic classifications and low participation neighbourhoods. Work continues on developing new performance indicators using income and parental education.
4. The Government is interested in understanding and explaining changes in the national data sets including data on the distribution of under-represented groups across HE, and in assessing the contribution relevant programmes, including Aimhigher, are making. The funders will commission new national research in March 2008 that will continue to investigate these questions. For example, analysts at DIUS and HEFCE are considering whether it is possible to identify the strength of association between WP interventions and participation outcomes; the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has been asked to track Aimhigher Excellence Challenge participants into HE; and HEFCE is tracking the path of summer school participants into HE.
5. Good research depends on obtaining reliable data. Large scale quantitative approaches are not the only research tools available, and the funders will commission research that uses case studies, systematically and rigorously developed, to test

the impact of different strands of WP initiatives.

Research questions could include, for example:

- a. To what extent do teachers consider the Aimhigher programme has raised HE awareness, aspirations and attainment?
  - b. What has been the effect on student motivation and attainment of mentoring or master classes?
  - c. To what extent have Aimhigher activities (and other WP activities by HEIs) been incorporated into school and college timetables?
6. Case studies that are representative and in depth can begin to create a national picture of the effects of Aimhigher and other widening participation initiatives.
7. Research of this nature depends on the quality of data held by partnerships as well as on the ability of researchers to analyse the data, follow suitable lines of enquiry, and make appropriate connections with other sources of evidence. This programme of commissioned research may be preceded by a feasibility study to assess the extent to which the research is likely to be successful. The feasibility study should be helpful to partnerships that are considering their own evaluation plans.
8. Useful research also depends on asking questions that are clear, focused and specific. HEFCE will share the draft specification for new research more widely with Aimhigher and WP colleagues in HEIs so that consultation and discussion can contribute to shaping and clarifying the specification before a contract is tendered.
9. HEFCE will also commission a national study to report before the end of 2011 on outcomes across the whole programme 2004-11.

### Evaluation at area level

10. The aims of evaluation at area level are to improve understanding of:

- a. The impact of Aimhigher programmes on targeted participants. This will involve exploring the quality of the interventions themselves, their impact on perceptions of, and attitudes towards, HE and their impact on outcomes for the learner, including their behaviour and commitment to learning, attainment, and the choices available to them including HE.
- b. The impact of Aimhigher on providers. This needs to be explored at an individual and institutional level. For example, at the individual level, the evaluation might investigate the ways in which Aimhigher has impacted upon teachers' perceptions of HE and the relevance of this for their pupils. At institutional level, the evaluation could focus on the impact of Aimhigher on institutional (school, college and higher education institution) commitment to and action towards widening participation in HE.

11. The purposes of the Aimhigher evaluation, nationally and locally, are accountability and programme improvement. These purposes are closely related:

- a. **Accountability:** Although monitoring will tell us whether public funds were spent appropriately on the activities set out in the strategic and operating plans, evaluation addresses a different kind of accountability: we have to answer the question 'is this funding achieving the purposes for which it has been provided?'. This is a question that HEFCE and government departments have to answer as well as Area Partnerships.

b. **Evaluation to improve what we do:** to the extent that it identifies what works (and what is cost effective), the partnership feeds the results of evaluation back into planning to use the available resource more effectively and improve its future programme. The aim should be continuous improvement.

12. Evaluation requires partnerships to collect data about participants, and what happens to those participants subsequently (recording the effects of WP activities and of the programmes). It also requires partnerships to collect data in respect of broadly defined categories of activity. If every activity is treated as unique the data becomes impossible to analyse in a meaningful way. We discuss each of these (data, activity, outcomes) below but first summarise our expectations of partnerships.

### Expectations

13. Partnerships will put in place an evaluation plan by the end of this academic year (July 2008), taking account of the Aimhigher Evidence Good Practice Group's guidance and the CSET programme for building evaluation capacity. This plan should be submitted to HEFCE by 31 July 2008. Although the evaluation plan will be submitted three months after the strategic plan, partnerships will be expected to ensure that, collectively or individually, they commit sufficient resource to evaluation to be able to meet the funders' expectations.

a. Evaluation reports will be submitted each year in the first week of September (ie following the end of the previous academic year) and will focus on the effects of widening participation interventions; that is to say, outcomes for learners and associated effects for schools, colleges and other stakeholders.

b. Partnerships should be selective and focused, using samples and examples, to design their evaluation. Partnerships should not try to evaluate everything nor turn practitioners into researchers.

c. Partnerships could consider whether to adopt a 'rolling programme' for evaluation as suggested by the Aimhigher Evidence Good Practice Group's guidance, ensuring that at least its core interventions are adequately reported over the three-year funding cycle.

14. Partnerships should plan to produce an evaluation report that answers the following two questions:

a. To what extent has the Aimhigher programme raised HE awareness, aspirations and attainment and promoted learner progression among its targeted participants?

b. What lessons can we learn from the evaluation that will help us to improve our programme?

15. Evaluation involves analysis to assess the extent to which the programme is meeting its objectives. The evaluation plan should consider the ways in which the partnership will capture and analyse:

- the perceptions of learners, teachers, parents and others who engage with the programme
- the effects of the programme on aspirations
- the impact on the ways in which learners subsequently engage with learning
- learners' achievements
- learners' progression.

16. To accomplish these objectives, partnerships will need to collect adequate data about participants and activities, and to follow up learners to understand the effects of the programme. 'Follow-up' can be achieved through feedback from schools and colleges, provided the data are held in a simple and accessible form so that they can be interrogated to provide answers to the partnership's key questions. A database is useful for this purpose so long as it is developed on a scale that makes it possible to update and to use the information recorded. We use the term 'follow up' rather than tracking because the latter can be read to mean a large scale data exercise which is difficult to do and costly to sustain over time. Small scale tracking of a sample of participants drawn from across the activity range should be sufficient to meet the funders' expectations. Some partnerships have tracking activity in place and, where this is working successfully, they will be able to use these systems in their evaluation plans. All partnerships are advised that they will need to make effective use of data they collect from schools.

17. Area Partnerships will need to consider whether evaluation, or some aspects of evaluation, should be carried out collectively with other partnerships, for example at regional level. Partnerships will be aware of interesting evaluation work carried out in the East and West Midlands, and in the South West, and the expertise in evaluation that has already been developed by these teams. There are opportunities for aggregating data for comparison or supplementing it with data on the pattern of applications and acceptances to HE across an Area or region by social class or measures of deprivation (such as The Index of Multiple Deprivation). However, whether evaluation is carried out by Area Partnerships or at regional level, it must include an assessment of the effects

of WP activities against their own objectives and close to the action on the ground in their own local context.

18. The Aimhigher evaluation should use a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures in a complementary way.

19. The assessment of the effects of WP activities should take into account the characteristics of learners (social background) and should try to quantify, compare or at least contextualise those effects. For example, if a mentoring programme is being evaluated, the report should specify the ways in which the data were collected, the number of mentees and mentors, the outcomes for mentees and mentors in comparison to a relevant benchmark (eg school average and local authority average). In other words, the evaluation report will be expected to discuss and assess the significance of the findings rather than simply describe them.

#### **Data, activity, and outcomes**

20. No partnership can possibly collect information from all participants in every activity. Partnerships must decide which activities are the ones where core data will be collected. As a guide this should cover a manageable sample of participants on all the main categories of activity in which the partnership is engaged.

21. Participant data must include:

- name
- address including post code
- school/college/training provider/employer
- gender
- ethnicity
- any disability
- occupation of chief wage earner (to be coded for NS-SEC classification)

- the activity (category) to which the participation relates. Where the activity is part of a 'progressive programme' it should record the learner's progress (see paragraphs 26-28 below).

22. Partnerships must obtain the necessary data protection permission to use these data to contact learners again to involve them in new activity, and for the purposes of research and evaluation. This should include sharing data for research and evaluation. Learners and their parents/carers must decide whether or not they are prepared to give their consent, and this should not be a condition of participation in the programme.

23. Partnerships will be expected to make every effort to ensure data quality, and that they are stored in an accessible and secure format so that if they are asked about participants (and their characteristics) in relation to a given type of activity they should be able to provide the information. Some partnerships have collected these data in relatively sophisticated ways (databases recording a range of information). HEFCE only wishes to be prescriptive about the collection of core data identified in paragraph 21, that it is accessible by the funders and that the partnership commit sufficient resource to draw off reports if required.

24. HEFCE has previously asked for monitoring returns using a 'typology' focused on aims eg activities to raise aspirations, and activities to raise attainment. Partnerships have found this unhelpful, and it has not been easy to use returns for the purposes of analysis. We propose instead to ask partnerships to use the following list of core activities for the purposes of monitoring and as a focus for the collection of participant data;

in other words, to collect data about people participating in the following activities:

- campus visits
- mentoring
- master classes
- student ambassadors
- IAG
- summer schools (broad ESF-type definition)
- schools-based activities as part of a specific programme (where agreed)
- college training/FE provider based activities as part of a specific programme (where agreed)
- healthcare strand
- staff development
- other category (or specified categories).

25. We know that this list involves significant overlap and that the categories themselves cover a range of interventions. This is inevitable, and partnerships should use their discretion in applying this classification. A programme of work with apprentices agreed with a college or training provider for example, can be recorded as a specified 'programme agreed with a college training/FE provider'. Although this classification does not capture the full flavour of the learner progression framework, its focus is on progressive interventions and it fulfils the basic purpose of providing information to support evaluation. For example, the data will be able to demonstrate number and type of participants across the range of activities so that partnerships can assess the extent to which their targeting has been successful. This is central to evaluation, as high quality activities delivered to those who are not in the target group will not contribute to closing the social class gap in HE participation.

### **The effects of widening participation**

26. For the purpose of evaluation, partnerships should collect data about ‘what happens to those participants subsequently (recording the effects of WP interventions)’. This is the key to evaluation and underscores the importance of the learner progression framework as a co-ordinated programme of sequenced activities.

27. The funders are interested in outcomes for the learner. As Aimhigher is a long-term programme and progression to HE is a distant goal for many participants, it is useful to consider intermediate outcomes that indicate the positive impact of the programme. For example, the extent to which Aimhigher has helped develop positive learner identities can indicate that the programme is beginning to impact on learner behaviour. We can establish that a programme has had a positive impact when, at the end of a particular phase, the learner can be shown to be:

- better motivated
- able to make more informed decisions
- able to organise their work better
- confident about their ability to progress
- able to understand their learning style and uses this information more effectively
- able to understand the significance of higher education and what it might offer.

28. The learner progression framework aims to associate outcomes with phases of the learner journey and link them with sequenced combinations of activities. In this way the programme operates like a curriculum and develops a number of competencies around learner progression. This model is at a draft stage and has yet to be tested with practitioners, but should go some way to defining what Aimhigher can do in terms of adding value to normal educational processes. Learners should achieve more academically because of the way the

Aimhigher curriculum directs them to think about their future and the development of their competencies. This experience should contribute to improved attainment and progression, opening up choices in higher education.

### **Evidence from schools**

29. Evidence about outcomes for learners depends upon feedback from schools and colleges as well as the use of published data such as attainment tables. In HE, HEFCE is careful to respect the autonomy of institutions and seeks to minimise the regulatory burden. In schools and colleges similar considerations apply. The thrust of policy is towards greater autonomy, devolution of responsibility (for example in the new relationship with schools) and minimum burden. In terms of evaluation this has meant an emphasis on published data such as attainment tables rather than feedback from schools. We will continue to stress the importance of minimising burden and maximising the use of published data but now wish to draw attention to the importance of evidence collected from schools. As relationships are strengthened among schools, colleges and HEIs, funders expect more of the evidence for the effectiveness of WP will come from schools. If schools value WP activities, build them into their plans for school improvement and can provide evidence of improved learner outcomes, the case for WP is made.

30. Evaluation in depth of even a carefully selected sample of WP learners depends on feedback from teachers. Given the demands on teachers' time, partnerships will need to employ a variety of strategies to obtain this, and success will depend on the quality of partnership arrangements. In the best case, for a core of partner schools, an annual assessment will include an assessment by teachers of the impact of a number of activities. The inclusion of named programmes in the school calendar; and the

contribution of WP activity recorded in school reports generated for a variety of purposes will all provide evidence of the impact of the programme. Where there is deeper commitment and a range of evidence about groups of learners is available, there will be evidence of changes in the learning culture of the school to which WP will have contributed. There are already a number of examples in the past year where teachers have provided evidence of this sort.

31. A range of relationships with schools and colleges is likely to have developed within an Aimhigher partnership, and there will be different levels of engagement. However, it is likely that a core group of target schools could be expected to make a significant contribution to the evaluation of the work of the partnership. In a partnership without a core group at present, the first task is to create it. No partnership can be expected to carry out a thorough evaluation without a minimum level of co-operation from school and college partners.

32. Scope for feedback from schools will be varied but is more likely to be successful if developed as a 'sample', on a small rather than larger scale, for specific activities (with a view to linking results from each of them). The form that assessment is to take should be agreed in advance with key partners. Where this kind of assessment is not possible this should be recorded as part of the evaluation and fed back to the funders to inform national discussions about the availability and quality of evidence for the impact of WP activity.

33. In some cases partnerships have to rely on an indirect connection between activities and outcomes, looking, for example, at the way the number and variety of activities correlate with

educational success in target schools and colleges. In practice, across the whole programme evidence is likely to be a mixture of these elements. For example, the contribution of Aimhigher can be evidenced by attainment trends in target schools compared with non target schools or compared to past performance in these schools themselves, alongside evidence relating to smaller, specific groups of students on mentoring programmes, summer schools and so on.

34. The evaluation is seeking to establish the effects of the programme and how these effects reinforce one another across an integrated, progressive programme to create a change in the opportunities for learners. This is what evaluation is intended to achieve. The funders expect partnerships to adopt an approach to evaluation that builds up 'layers' of evidence over time, connects evidence from one activity with evidence from another, and can contextualise the results to draw meaningful conclusions about the impact of the programme.

#### **Making use of the evaluation**

35. Partnerships are expected to use their evaluation to inform subsequent activity. The funders will use the evaluation to review the programme and consider what further steps they need to take to improve its effectiveness. We will commission an analysis of the evaluation returns and this could lead to additional advice to partnerships or further research; it could also inform the work of the WP co-ordination team. The evaluation reports are expected to feed into a publication providing an overall end-of-year (and subsequently end-of-programme) assessment of the impact of Aimhigher<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> We are grateful to all those who commented on evaluation but wish particularly to thank Sue Hatt (University of the West of England and Regional Manager Aimhigher South West Region) for her comments on evaluation although she bears no responsibility for the content of the final document.



# Annex E

## National communications strategy

1. We are currently updating the national communications strategy for Aimhigher to reflect the future communications needs of the programme. The strategy will be finalised in February and regular updates will be available on the Aimhigher practitioner site – [www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner).
2. The National Communications Resource Team (NCRT) will continue for at least one more year. The NCRT has played an important role in raising the profile of Aimhigher in the national media and elsewhere, working with Aimhigher partnerships. The National Aimhigher Awards Scheme proved particularly effective in this regard and will continue.
3. Our recent survey of Aimhigher communications (December 2007) received over 100 responses and we are grateful to all those who participated. The survey responses are currently being analysed and these will feed into the development of the updated strategy. Those who registered interest in reviewing or providing input to the draft version of the strategy will be contacted during February.
4. Although further analysis is continuing, there appear to be a number of emerging themes from the survey. One of these is that there should be closer communication between the National Communications Resource Team and Area Partnerships. We therefore propose to identify a communications lead in each Area Partnership and to provide them with support and guidance in delivering local communications activity (via the NCRT) as well as encouraging them to regularly share information about programme activities that might have national media potential. Another theme was that there should be more opportunities for partnerships to influence those resources produced nationally and we will look to include this in the strategy.
5. A significant number of publications and web-sites aimed at young people and other target

audiences are produced by Aimhigher Area Partnerships and the survey has identified a need to co-ordinate this to avoid duplication, especially with national material. Careful consideration needs to be given to the need for a local version of a publication that is available nationally, and we propose that partnerships should notify the NCRT when a significant new publication or web-site is planned. Careful consideration should also be given to the audience for the publication and whether it will be accessible to the entire Aimhigher readership or aimed at a particular group, such as learners with disabilities.

### National Aimhigher conference

6. In October 2007, Aimhigher area and regional co-ordinators organised a national Aimhigher conference, convened by Action on Access. This provided a powerful national focus together with other events associated with the programme's communications work underpinning dissemination and good practice such as the National Aimhigher awards scheme showcasing the programme's key achievements. We will consider the ways in which we can develop the awards scheme as an annual event to recognise the achievements of area partnerships, share best practice as widely as possible and take forward publicity for Aimhigher.

### The Aimhigher Roadshow

7. The Aimhigher Roadshow will continue to operate as it provides Area Partnerships with a flexible and mobile focus for the promotion of Aimhigher in schools, colleges and the wider community. Arrangements to facilitate and maximise the promotional opportunities offered by the Aimhigher Roadshow should be included in the annual operational plans of partnerships. Plans should show the way in which the Aimhigher Roadshow has been integrated so that it is not viewed in isolation from other activities and its impact can be maximised.

# List of abbreviations

<b>APC</b>	Area Partnership Committee
<b>ASG</b>	Area Steering Group
<b>AMG</b>	Aimhigher Management Group
<b>DCSF</b>	Department for Children, Schools and Families
<b>DIUS</b>	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>FE</b>	Further education
<b>HE</b>	Higher education
<b>HEFCE</b>	Higher Education Funding Council for England
<b>HEI</b>	Higher education institution
<b>HESA</b>	Higher Education Statistics Agency
<b>LSC</b>	Learning and Skills Council
<b>NCRT</b>	National Communications Resource Team
<b>NPB</b>	National Partnership Board
<b>RPB</b>	Regional Partnership Board
<b>WP</b>	Widening participation

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